

# **TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**11 RYE STREET, P.O. Box 389**

**BROAD BROOK, CT 06016**

Website: <http://www.eastwindsorct.com>

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## ***Special Meeting Minutes April 19, 2011***

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### **I. ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM**

*Members Present:* James Richards, Josh Kapelner and Ryan Nilsson.

*Also in attendance:* Laurie Whitten, Town Planner

Acting Chairman James Richards called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Express, 252 Main Street, East Windsor, CT. He explained that the Economic Development Commission meets every month at the town hall in the Planning and Zoning office. He said he was hoping for a better turnout and thanked the business owners that showed up.

### **II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mr. Kapelner felt that it would be better to approve the minutes when all the EDC members were present.

**MOTION:** To defer to the next meeting the approval of the minutes for the March 31, 2011 meeting. Kapelner / Nilsson / Unanimous

Mr. Richards noted that there was a motion at the last meeting, based on public input, to have the Planning & Zoning Commission review the sign regulations. He said they have not met since that time and indicated that they will work on that next.

### **III. BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE:**

#### **Commercial Real Estate Listing Service / Web Site**

Ryan Nilsson said that right now they are working toward getting a commercial real estate listing service on the town web site. If something is available for sale or rental we can list it on the web site. He said if anyone has anything that is up for rent or sale or know of anyone, send us the information.

### **Sewer Line Extension on Route 140**

Mr. Richards indicated that at the end of April the construction will begin on the sewer line extension. He said this will generate a new era of economic development in town. He said if you have a business on North Road the DOT and WPCA are committed to keeping the road open or business. December 2011 will be the end of construction, if not sooner. Mr. Richards noted that there is a new Planning & Zoning Commission hearing sign on Route 140. That shows that there is going to be interest there. He said he hopes that the North Road extension will create a connector all the way from South Windsor to Enfield. He said the traffic that goes down 140 is about the same amount of traffic that goes down Route 5. He said next spring he imagines that we will have all kinds of new construction going on.

Peter DeMallie, of Design Professionals asked about public water. Mr. Richards said the WPCA is having problems convincing the CT Water Company. He said he wasn't sure what they could do. He said it would cost the person coming in more money. They will have to tear the road up again. Mr. DeMallie said it is critical for intensive development. They need a major shareholder. Mr. DeMallie also asked about natural gas. Mr. Richards said that is also a problem. Mr. Richards said they (the EDC) will be approaching the Planning & Zoning Commission for the zoning. Mr. DeMallie said one thing developers look for is whether zoning is in place for what they need. If the zoning is not in place it is a problem. They want to know the development potential.

### **Budget / Tax Increases**

Josh Kapelner gave a slide presentation and explained that he would be going over our economic environment, namely our tax climate and property tax burden. He pointed out state business tax rankings after the fall of 2010. He said the bottom states would be considered less business friendly. Connecticut ranks number 47, just ahead of New Jersey and New York. He said no other New England states are there. He said for the property tax climate, Connecticut is #49. It is a problem for businesses to be able to make it. He said the EDC is business friendly. Connecticut is considered business unfriendly. Mr. Kapelner pointed out that Pfizer Company of New London left to go to Massachusetts which meant close to 1,000 jobs.

Mr. Kapelner said our call is to be business friendly. We are trying to offer a free commercial web site for real estate listings. He noted that the EDC has worked very hard with the Planning and Zoning Commission to expand their wastewater treatment. He said if we want the long-term commitment for business we need

to provide certainty with a stable business tax rate. If a business can't cover their costs we know what happens. He pointed out that during the past 2 years the property tax rate increased by 14.8%, compared to the inflation rate of 3.4%. This occurred while the unemployment rate has been at 9.6%. Mr. Kapelner indicated that for the past 4 years a neighboring community has not changed their property tax rate. He said the EDC will support a tax increase but we can't have it go up more than the rate of inflation.

Mr. Kapelner noted that in the 2010-11 budget, after 3 referendums failed, the town charter rules were followed. The charter talks about a 2% increase in the budget. That wasn't a 2% tax increase. The total tax increase was 10.334%. He said they would like to see some stability. They want people to come to East Windsor and stay in East Windsor. He said they would like to see the town charter changed to state that after 3 referendums fail, the tax rate and not the budget would increase by 2%. That would be a win/win. Mr. DeMallie noted that when you have a revaluation the tax rate drops considerably. That would be a problem. Mr. Kapelner said hopefully the town grows and they get growth on the grand list.

### **Round Table Discussion**

Mr. Richards said the EDC is trying to find out what the businesses think of the town, both constructive criticism and positive.

Lou Martin, of the Riverview Restaurant, talked about signage. He said he is still looking for some help. He said the State of Connecticut is not willing to cooperate. He said they are at the point where they have to raise prices. They are looking to be able to advertise. He said he is willing to put a petition out to change the sign regulations. He doesn't want to leave. He said he spent \$13,000 on signage and you don't even know he is there.

Peter DeMallie asked about the focus for the EDC. Mr. Richards said they are looking at the Route 140 and Route 5 corridor as well as Broad Brook. They are looking at different types of zoning for different areas. He said for Broad Brook they would like to create the smaller New England Village atmosphere.

Mr. DeMallie talked about what businesses are looking for. They look at utilities. He said on Route 140, having the sewers is the first start. He said businesses look at zoning – is it flexible? Are the regulations in place? Is there an incentive? They look at one town vs. another. In one town they could be getting a 50% tax abatement for 3 years; in another town you won't get that. He said they also want to be able to have an informal discussion with the PZC. They want to hear

all the negatives and positives. He said if you have to go to public hearings it is riskier. Ms. Whitten noted that on tax abatements, the view point of the current Board of Selectmen is that although people think our taxes are high, are taxes are one of the lowest in the state. Mr. DeMallie reiterated that if you don't have the public water and gas, that is a problem.

Mr. Richards thanked the Holiday Inn Express for the refreshments and again thanked everyone for coming.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT:**

**MOTION:** To adjourn the meeting. Kapelner / Nilsson / Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Bauer, Recording Secretary